DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 336 132 JC 910 394

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TITLE Piedmont Virginia Community College's Pathways: The Process of Developing Clusters of Nondevelopmental Courses for Developmental Students.
PUB DATE 90
NOTE 13p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Academic Achievement; Community Colleges; Course Descriptions; *High Risk Students; Mathematics Skills; Minimum Competencies; *Prerequisites; Program Development; Reading Skills; *Remedial Instruction; Remedial Reading; *Student Placement; Two Year Colleges; Two Year College Students; Writing Skills
IDENTIFIERS *Piedmont Virginia Community College

ABSTRACT

Studies conducted at Piedmont Virginia Community College (PVCC) suggested that developmental reading and writing students were much more likely than nondevelopmental students to fail or withdraw from nondevelopmental courses. Lower achievement levels were also noted for developmental students enrolled in college transfer courses. In 1988-89, the Dean of Instruction charged the Developmental Task Force with determining the reading and writing requirements for all courses at the college. As a first step, science and humanities division chairs created a short list of courses that would be appropriate for developmental students. Next, a brief course survey was developed for instructors at the college to determine the skill levels expected of students enrolling in each course. In spring 1991, all divisions submitted the decisions of individual faculty members or of the division as a whole about the reading, writing, and/or math skill levels necessary for an average grade in division courses. Survey responses were used to develop the "Pathways" list, which identifies the developmental reading, writing, and math courses that reflect the minimum competency levels required of students enrolled in each course taught at the college. The draft listing was disseminated to counselors for use in summer 1991 advisement and counseling. The "Pathways" list, guidelines for the development of Pathways, and data on student achievement are included in the report. (PAA)

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Piedmont Virginia Community College's Pathways: The Process of Developing Clusters of Nondevelopmental Courses for Developmental Students

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JC 910 394

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PIEDMONT VIRGINIA COMMUNITY COLLEGE'S PATHWAYS: THE PROCESS OF DEVELOPING CLUSTERS OF NONDEVELOPMENTAL COURSES FOR DEVELOPMENTAL STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT: Tracking results on developmental reading and writing students confirmed a low success rate in many college transfer courses when taken simultaneously with developmental reading and writing. Piedmont Virginia Community College's Dean of Instruction, charged the Developmental Ad Hoc Committee to determine clusters of courses which could be attempted by developmental students at various skill levels. Before this could be accomplished, the college reviewed the skill levels of reading, writing, and math required for all courses offered by the college. The result was a listing of courses and levels of proficiency now used by the college for counseling and placement called Pathways.

PIEDMONT VIRGINIA COMMUNITY COLLEGE'S PATHWAYS: THE PROCESS OF DEVELOPING CLUSTERS OF NONDEVELOPMENTAL COURSES FOR DEVELOPMENTAL STUDENTS

Preliminary tracking results at Piedmont Virginia Community College (PVCC) suggest strong support for careful course selection among developmental reading and writing students. A study conducted in 1990-91 analyzes the performance of the population of developmental reading and writing students in the fall semesters of 1988, 1989, and 1990.

Five hundred and ninety-one students enrolled in developmental writing and/or developmental reading during the three fall semesters. See Table 1 for the population by year.

Table 1: Developmental Reading and Writing Students in Tracking Study by Year

FALL 1988	FALL 1989	FALL 1990
N = 174	N = 165	N = 252

Students who were enrolled in developmental reading and/or writing simultaneously enrolled in nondevelopmental courses: 61 different nondevelopmental courses in 1988, 63 nondevelopmental courses in 1989, and 67 nondevelopmental courses in 1990. These students generated 634, 620, and 700 credit hours not including their developmental courses (developmental writing is a 4 credit hour course as is developmental reading). The full-time equivalents (FTE's) generated, though not excessive, should be considered. Table 2 summarizes data over the three year period.

Table 2: Summary of Developmental Reading and Writing Students in Nondevelopmental Courses

	1988	1989	1990
DIFFERENT COURSES	61	63	67
TOTAL DUPLICATED COURSES	219	225	243
CREDIT HOURS*	634	620	700
FTE'S**	42.2	41.3	46.6

*Credit hours are for nondevelopmental courses only.
**Full-Time Equivalents

Comparison of the grade distribution between developmental students in nondevelopmental courses to the grades of PVCC's general population suggests that the developmental student in a nondevelopmental course is much more likely to fail or withdraw (see Table 3). In fall 1988, for example, 50% of developmental reading and writing students grades in nondevelopmental courses were D, F, or W. Although an increasing number of developmental students during the study period earned grades of A, most were recorded in skills courses: in 1988, 12% made a grade of A in nondevelopmental courses, but over 70% of these were in selected skills courses like physical education and typing. For the two years where comparative data are available, developmental students are less likely to make an A or B in a nondevelopmental course and are far more likely to receive grades of D, F, or W than the general population. However, it should also be noted that the percentage of D, F, or W grades decreased each year of the study.

Table 3: Comparison of Developmental Students' Grades in Nondevelopmental Courses to the General PVCC Grade Distribution* for Selected Years

	1988		1989		1990**
GRADES	DEV	GEN	DEV	GEN	DEV
A	12%	30.4%	16.4%	32.5%	20%
B	16%	19.5%	15.5%	20.7%	20%
C	18%	10.2%	21%	11.6%	23%
D	14%	3.4%	12%	3.4%	8%
F	15%	4.9%	12.8%	4.3%	11.9%
W	21%	12.7%	20%	14.2%	13.5%

* PVCC Management Information Book
** No comparison data available

Certain transfer courses were analyzed to determine developmental students' performance while they were simultaneously attempting remediation. Although the N varied in the courses from a low of 4 to a high of 26, developmental reading and writing students who enrolled in selected college transfer courses received a high percentage of D, F, or W grades over a three year period.

Table 4: Percentages of D, F, or W Grades in Selected Transfer Courses over the Years 1988, 1989, 1990

Courses	Percentage in 1988	Percentage in 1989	Percentage in 1990
ACC 211	75%	75%	50%
BIO 101	75%	57.1%	80%
ECO 201	100%	83.3%	00%
HIS 121	60%	50%	41.6%
MTH 161	62%	73%	00%
PSY 201	100%	85.7%	75%
SOC 201	83%	66.6%	25%

By 1990 data reflect that developmental students were not enrolling in at least two of the transfer courses--ECO 201 and MTH 161. Although not all developmental students did poorly in all nondevelopmental courses, most of the percentages above suggest the need for careful guidelines to students about reading and writing requirements in courses.

The institutional discussion establishing reading and writing requirements for all courses at the institution was begun in 1984 and was set aside. Over the years, State Council of Higher Education in Virginia guidelines, outcomes assessment data, and an increased institutional awareness of the need to enable students, brought the issue of back for action. In 1988-89 the Dean of Instruction charged the Developmental Task Force to develop a plan. The answer to this charge is Pathways (Haury 1989).

In a short range plan, the division chairs of both sciences and humanities create an initial short list of courses which would be appropriate for developmental reading, writing, and math students. The list and concept were piloted in fall 1990-91. During the year, the task force continued its work by developing guidelines for establishing Pathways (see Attachment 1) and a brief survey sheet for each course taught at the college.

In the spring of 1991, all divisions submitted individual faculty or division decisions about the reading, writing, and/or math levels necessary for courses. The 1991 Pathways draft was disseminated to counselors for implementation during summer 1991 advisement and counseling.

The following list is PVCC's first institutional draft to establish Pathways.

PIEDMONT VIRGINIA COMMUNITY COLLEGE
PATHWAYS: 1991-1992
(DRAFT 6-1-91)

COURSE	*WRITING	*READING	*MATH	COMMENTS
ACC 105	ENG 01	ENG 05	MTH 02	
ADJ 100	ENG 01	ENG 04	MTH 02	
ADJ 130	ENG 03	ENG 05	MTH 02	
ADJ 131	ENG 03	ENG 06	MTH 02	
ADJ 139	ENG 03	ENG 05	MTH 02	
ADJ 201	ENG 03	ENG 06	MTH 02	
ADJ 229	ENG 03	ENG 06	MTH 02	
ADJ 236	ENG 03	ENG 05	MTH 02	
AIR	NA	NA	NA	
ARC 121	ENG 01	ENG 04	MTH 03	
ARC 122	ENG 01	ENG 05	MTH 03	
ARC 210-211	ENG 01	ENG 05	MTH 03	
ART (STUDIO)	ENG 01 & 03	ENG 04	NA	
ART (HISTORY)	ENG 111	ENG 06	NA	
AUT	NA	NA	NA	
BIO (ALL)	ENG 111	ENG 06	MTH 03	
BLD	NA	NA	NA	
BUS 100	ENG 03	ENG 06	MTH 03	(Reading is above the 06 beginning level)
BUS 111	ENG 01	ENG 04	MTH 02	
BUS 150	ENG 03	ENG 06	MTH 03	
BUS 157	ENG 111	ENG 111	MTH 03	
BUS 205	ENG 111	ENG 111	MTH 03	

COURSE	*WRITING	*READING	*MATH	COMMENTS
BUS 241	ENG 111	ENG 111	MTH 03	
CHM 01	ENG 111	ENG 06	MTH 03	
CHM 101	ENG 111	ENG 06	MTH 160	
CHM 111	ENG 111	ENG 06	MTH 161	
CIS 110	ENG 03	ENG 06	MTH 03	
CIS 116	ENG 03	ENG 06	MTH 03	
CIS 198	ENG 03	ENG 05	MTH 02	
CIS 199	ENG 03	ENG 05	MTH 02	
CRAFTS	ENG 01 & 03	------	NA	
DRF 211	ENG 03	ENG 05	MTH 115 OR 160	
DRF 212	ENG 03	ENG 05	MTH 115 OR 160	
DRF 231	ENG 01	ENG 05	MTH 03	
DRF 232	ENG 03	ENG 05	MTH 03	
DRF 233	ENG 03	ENG 05	MTH 03	
EDUCATION	ENG 01 & 03	ENG 04	NA	
EGR** (except 111 & 112)	ENG 111	ENG 06	MTH 161	
EGR 111	ENG 03	ENG 05	MTH 03	
EGR 112	ENG 03	ENG 05	MTH 03	
ELE	NA	NA	NA?	
ELE 121	ENG 03	ENG 06	MTH 115	
EMT	ENG 111	ENG 04	MTH 02 & 03	
ENG 111-112	ENG 111	ENG 06	NA	
ESL	ENG 01 & 02	ENG 04	NA	
ETR 113	ENG 03	ENG 06	MTH 03	

COURSE	*WRITING	*READING	*MATH	COMMENTS
ETR 121	ENG 03	ENG 06	MTH 115	
ETR 281	ENG 03	ENG 06	MTH 03	
ETR 261-262			MTH 115-116	
ETR 203-204			MTH 115-116	
ETR 218-218	ENG 03		MTH 115-116	
FRE 101-102	ENG 111	ENG 06	NA	
FRE 103	ENG 111	ENG 06	NA	
GEO	ENG 03	ENG 06	NA	
GER 101-102	ENG 111	ENG 06	NA	
HIS 101-102	ENG 111	ENG 06	NA	
HIS 121-122	ENG 111	ENG 06	NA	
HLT	ENG 111	ENG 04	MTH 02 & 03	
IND 113	ENG 03	ENG 05	MTH 03	
ITA 111-112	ENG 111	ENG 06	NA	
JPN 101-102	ENG 111	ENG 06	NA	
LAT 101-102	ENG 111	ENG 06	NA	
MKT 100	ENG 03	ENG 06	MTH 03	
MKT Electives	ENG 03	ENG 06	MTH 03	
MTH 02	ENG 01	ENG 04	NA	
MTH 03	ENG 01	ENG 04	NA	
MTH 115-116	ENG 03	ENG 05	NA	
MTH 121	ENG 03	ENG 05	NA	
MTH 160	ENG 01	ENG 04	NA	
MTH 161	ENG 03	ENG 05	NA	

COURSE	*WRITING	*READING	*MATH	COMMENTS
MTH 162	ENG 03	ENG 06	NA	
MTH 173-174	ENG 03	ENG 06	NA	
MTH 181	ENG 03	ENG 05	NA	
MTH 241	ENG 03	ENG 06	NA	
MTH 275-276	ENG 111	ENG 06 completed	NA	
MUS (STUDIO)	ENG 01 & 03	ENG 06	NA	
MUS (HISTORY)	ENG 111	ENG 06	NA	
NAS (185)	ENG 111	ENG 06	MTH 03	
NUR	ENG 111	ENG 04	MTH 02 & 03	
OFT 105	NA	ENG 05	NA	
OFT 111	NA	ENG 05	NA	
OFT 112	ENG 03	ENG 05	NA	
OFT 116	NA	ENG 04	NA	
OFT 137	ENG 03	ENG 05	MTH 02	
OFT 199	NA	ENG 05	NA	
OFT 215	ENG 03	ENG 06	NA	
OFT 216	ENG 111	ENG 111	NA	
OFT 241	ENG 111	ENG 06	NA	
OFT 251	ENG 111	ENG 111	NA	
PHI	ENG 111	ENG 06	NA	
		CUTOFF ABOVE	NA	
PHT	ENG 01 & 03	ENG 04	NA	
PHY 131	ENG 111	ENG 06	MTH 115	
PHY 201	ENG 111	ENG 06	MTH 161	
PHY 241	ENG 111	ENG 06	MTH 173	

PLS COURSE	ENG 03 *WRITING	ENG 06 *READING	NA *MATH	COMMENTS
PSY 201-202	ENG 111	ENG 06	MTH 03	
PSY 231-232	ENG 111	ENG 06	MTH 03	
REL	ENG 03	ENG 06	NA	
RUS 101-102	ENG 111	ENG 06	NA	
SOC 201	ENG 111	ENG 06	NA	
SOC 202	ENG 111	ENG 06	NA	
SOC 215	ENG 111	ENG 06	NA	
SPA 101-102	ENG 111	ENG 06	NA	
SPD 100	ENG 111	ENG 06	NA	

Attachment 1

GUIDELINES FOR DEVELOPMENT OF PATHWAYS

In an attempt to improve the quality of learning at PVCC, the Developmental Ad Hoc Committee requests assistance from area faculty in identifying "Pathways" (clusters of appropriate courses). Pathways will help the institution to fulfill its open door mission for students, many of whom are pre-college To expedite this process, the committee has developed informal descriptions of pre-college courses from which the faculty may determine the interdependence of skills to college courses. Using the following descriptions, please determine which of these skill levels are requisite for an average grade in the courses offered by your division.

DESCRIPTIONS

WRITING

Generally, ENG 01 students will have noticeable difficulty with reading and writing especially summarizing, synthesizing, and recalling information. The text they produce is generally short (100-150 words in 30 minutes) and if longer is generally disorganized. They will have significant difficulty organizing their writing because they cannot read globally what they have written. In some cases, they punctuate sentences as units, use little detail (with more or less normal word order), and have significant problems with spelling and usage.

Generally, students in ENG 03 will have a higher reading and writing level so there is more ability to summarize, synthesize, and recall information, but often with misreading of the main ideas. They are more capable of organizing their thoughts because they can better read what they have written, but many retain serious problems in organization. They tend to be able to focus more on an idea and develop it more with clearer explanation and illustration than students in ENG 01. Because they can read better, they can sense flow but usually lack familiarity with academic conventions of language. The text will be longer, more detailed, and more focused with fewer spelling and punctuation errors.

READING

Generally, students in ENG 04 have literal reading comprehension skills but very basic interpretational skills (recognizing an historical date but not its significance, for example). They have difficulty recognizing patterns of organization and predicting outcomes. They can detect simple main ideas and thesis statements in what they read, but have difficulty drawing conclusions. They understand only basic roots, prefixes, and suffixes and have practically no library skills.

Generally, students in ENG 05 have moderate interpretational skills and are beginning to read critically, summarize with synthesis, and make inferences. They can discern author's intent including bias and propaganda. They have experience with the major reference tools and library facilities. They understand roots, prefixes, and suffixes and possess noticeably more sophisticated vocabulary skills.

Generally, students in ENG 06 are minimally capable of performing college-level work but require assistance in one reading-intensive course prior to an unrestricted (unmonitored) course selection.

MATH

Generally, students completing MTH 02 should be proficient in operations on whole numbers, decimals, fractions, and per cents. The student should be able to read line and bar graphs and be able to solve proportion, per cent, and interest problems.

Generally, students completing MTH 03 should be able to solve an equation or problem for an unknown (find A if A=bh, b=2 and h=6), evaluate and simplify expressions (3x + 4(5-x)-10), use formulas, and construct graphs.

SUGGESTED GUIDELINES

The following guidelines may assist in the initial discussion.

1. Instructors should probably determine the readability level of the texts used in their classes. This can be done by referring to the instructor's manual, by contacting the publisher, or by using a manual or computerized readability assessment, available from the English department.

2. Students in developmental reading should probably take only those courses that require reading at or below their level of reading proficiency.

3. Students in MTH 02 should probably not take humanities, health, or business courses which require use of decimals, percentages, or fractions. Students in MTH 02 or MTH 03 should probably not take humanities, health, or business courses which require the construction of graphs.

4. Developmental reading students should probably not take courses that are self-paced. Self-paced math courses should probably be taken by students who are refreshing their math skills, rather than learning math for the first time.

5. Students in developmental reading and/or writing should probably take classes that require, for the most part, objective or short answer tests and quizzes. However, faculty members should be aware that some multiple choice tests often require a high level of reading ability.

6. Students in developmental writing should probably not take courses that require organized, extended writing in standard written English for reports, tests, or homework.

7. Developmental students should probably not take classes which depend on critical reasoning. Instructors should ask themselves how much critical analysis is necessary to pass the course.

8. Students in developmental reading classes should probably take courses in which reading is done to support the primary lecture content of the course, rather than to serve as the principal learning tool.

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